

**HUGO CHÁVEZ AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIALISMO DEL
SIGLO XXI**

An Honors Fellows Thesis

by

DEREK ALAN LEIST

Submitted to the Honors Programs Office of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as
HONORS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOW

April 2011

Majors: Political Science
Economics

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

Hugo Chávez and the Impact of Socialismo del Siglo XXI. (April 2011)

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This thesis seeks to explain the reoccurring electoral success of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in the context of Chávez's exposure in the media, specifically, by evaluating his weekly show, *Aló Presidente*, alongside public opinion data to further develop our understanding of the Bolivarian Revolution and *Socialismo del Siglo XXI* (21st Century Socialism). Public opinion data from international sources is utilized alongside regional and local surveys to account for any polarization in the reporting by data firms that may have been reflected in the data, otherwise. While the *Constitución Bolivariana* of 1999 offered an egalitarian, liberal-progressive construction on paper, it also broadly strengthened the Executive, which President Chávez has utilized in undercutting liberal democracy, funding communal programs at the expense of local government, aiding his party's clientilistic network, and ultimately consolidating personal political power. Comparing the stated ideals of 21st Century Socialism from the coded *Aló Presidente* transcripts with popular opinion data concerning the president's social Mission programs has led to the conclusion that Chávez is succeeding in selling

Venezuelans on the necessity of the Bolivarian Missions programs, which may be a driving factor in his successes at the polls.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOMENCLATURE

AD	<i>Acción Democrática</i> – Democratic Action Party
ALBA	<i>La Alternativa Bolivariana Para las Américas</i> - Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean
Aló Presidente	Hello President
Asamblea Nacional	National Assembly
Chavistas	Supporters of President Hugo Chávez
Comandante	Commander
COPEI	Partido Social Cristiano de Venezuela– Social Christian Party of Venezuela
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
Jefe del Estado	Head of State
LAPOP	The Latin American Public Opinion Project
Latifundios	Large landed estate holders
Los barrios	The neighborhoods
Punto Fijo	The Pact at Punto Fijo
Socialismo del Siglo	XXI Socialism of the 21st Century

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Venezuela has undergone profound political, social, and economic change over the past decade. The Bolivarian Revolution, led by President Hugo Chávez Frías, has had major influence on all aspects of Venezuelan society. Massive state-directed, social spending programs (*los Misiones*), have galvanized support for the socialist project amongst populists and Venezuelans from the *barrios*, while divisive rhetoric from the President and attacks on the private sector in the form of nationalizations and expropriations have polarized Venezuelan politics. Mr. Chávez's loquacious style and unapologetic bashing of the United States have furthered the political chasm between *chavistas* and *antichavistas* and helped President Chávez to attract a large following of support from populist leftists around the world, while also attracting frequent criticism from western governments and defenders of the liberal democratic tradition. President Hugo Chávez, having embraced visual and social media outlets (television, radio, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) as a way of conveying his message to the masses has become arguably one of the most publically exposed *jefes del estado* in the world. This thesis seeks to explain the reoccurring electoral success of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in the context of Chávez's exposure in the media, specifically, by evaluating his weekly show, *Aló Presidente*. Analysis of his

This thesis follows the style of *American Political Science Review*.

television program alongside economic and public opinion data will be utilized to further develop our understanding of the Bolivarian Revolution and, specifically, *Socialismo del Siglo XXI* (21st Century Socialism).

The first mention by President Chávez of *Socialismo del Siglo XXI* occurs on January 30, 2005 at the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil (Wilpert 2009). Thus, this thesis will tend to focus on the recent past and not dwell on pre-Chávez years, as an extensive literature exists surrounding the faults and decay of the two-party system leading up to the 1999 election of Hugo Chávez.¹ In this paper, I will differentiate and compare the philosophy of *Socialismo del Siglo XXI*, based on the political and philosophical ideals of Venezuela's charismatic leader, with the actual enactment of social programs and socio-political change that Venezuela is currently undergoing. In order to better our understanding of the idealized philosophy of the Bolivarian project and *Socialismo del Siglo XXI*, outside sources will be utilized in our opening discussion of defining the Venezuelan socialist project. The definition of *Socialismo del Siglo XXI* from these secondary sources will then be compared to statements made by President Chávez in his *Aló Presidente* television program coded from *Aló Presidente* transcripts. Once this analysis has established a backdrop for the enactment of social spending programs embarked upon by the Chávez government, *Aló Presidente* transcripts are analyzed to assess the major policy areas that Mr. Chávez seeks to highlight in his weekly dialogue with the Venezuelan citizenry. Finally, socio-economic and public opinion data from

¹ See Tulchin and Bland (1993); Coppedge (1994, 1996); McCoy and Smith (1995); Weyland (1998); McCoy (1999); Levine and Crisp (1999).

international and regional sources will be used to compare the rhetoric with program implementation. By juxtaposing data from *Aló Presidente* with an array of public opinion data, we gain a better understanding for the relative successes and failures of the Chávez administration in marketing government led initiatives. Overall, I find that Chávez is succeeding in selling Venezuelans on the necessity of the Bolivarian Missions programs, which may be a driving factor in his successes at the polls. The main contribution of this thesis is to answer how President Hugo Chávez attempts to reeducate Venezuelans in the idealized 21st Century Socialism ideology vis-a-vi his weekly talk show, *Aló Presidente* and how effective he has been in these attempts.

I have chosen to analyze *Aló Presidente* though Chávez interacts with the Venezuelan citizenry in many ways, whether through social media (Twitter @chavezcandanga or Facebook), radio, or periodicals, due to the wide availability of television programming in Venezuela and because of the editorial publicity that the weekly show generates. The show, which averages airtime of ~6.22 hours (McCoy 2011) is unlikely to draw a weekly fully-attuned audience, with the exception of the most loyal *chavistas*. This does not diminish the valuable insight into the Bolivarian project that we shall gain by exploring the policy initiatives and social, economic, and political projects that tend to pique Chávez's interest and dominate the discussion on the program. Local, regional, and international news and social media outlets monitor information and rhetoric from the show and act as interlocutors between Chávez and the Venezuelan people through the program commentary that they disseminate. Understanding the information flow from television

program to social and official media outlets, then makes our analyses of the show pertinent if we wish to better our understanding of the socialist project that Chávez is attempting to construct in Venezuela. In particular, our analyses of *Aló Presidente* aids in our understanding of how Chavez is presenting his program directly to Venezuelans.

Brief synopsis of pre-Chávez era: end of partyocracy

The ascendancy of Hugo Chávez to the Venezuelan presidency is as much attributable to the chaotic, failed political environment in which he became a political figure, as to the charisma of *el presidente*, himself. This paper will not provide an in-depth discussion and analysis of Venezuelan politics prior to the first election of Hugo Chávez in 1999. An abundance of research exists concerning the creation of the democratic regime following *Punto Fijo* in 1958, the establishment of a two-party system dominated by *Acción Democrática (AD)* and *Partido Social Cristiano de Venezuela (COPEI)*, the role of petroleum funds and pacts in stabilizing the democratic regime, and the reasons why those established parties lost voter support.² Yet, an understanding of Venezuela's history and the events surrounding the rise to predominance of Hugo Chávez in Venezuelan politics is necessary in order to understand the problems that the country and the socialist project face today.

² See Tulchin, Joseph and Bland, Gary (1993); Coppedge, Michael (1994); McCoy, Jennifer and Smither, William C. (1995); Coppedge, Michael (1996); Weyland, Kurt (1998); Crisp, Brian (1998); McCoy, Jennifer (1999); Levine, H Daniel and Crisp, F Brian (1999)

Prior to the last decade of the twentieth century, the Venezuelan political landscape was controlled by the clientilistic interests of two parties. This two-party political system was “built on a pact among members of the elite, [whereby] the dominant political parties [were] the principal actors” (Tulchin and Bland 1993, p 2). The status quo perpetuated by the party system was maintained through peaceful transference of power between AD and COPEI from 1958 until the crumbling of the old system and the accession to power of Mr. Chávez through democratic means. The failed clientilistic network, corruption embodied by the entrenched bureaucratic interests, and unpopular neo-liberal policies of the late 1980’s and 1990’s instigated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and pursued by both AD’s and COPEI’s presidential administrations directly led to the disillusionment of the Venezuelan populace. This disillusionment with politics set the stage for the attempted military coup of 1992, orchestrated by Hugo Chávez and other military leaders from the younger generation of the officer corps (Guevara 2005).

With nearly ninety percent of the population citing corruption as a “very serious” problem confronting Venezuelan democracy in 1998 (Latinobarometro 1998a)³ and only thirty-eight percent of the population having a positive outlook on the economic future of the country in the late nineties (Latinobarometro 1998b)⁴, the stage was set for a newly energizing force to sweep through the Venezuelan political landscape. The charismatic

³ Latinobarometro 1998a “Cuán serio es el problema de corrupción hoy en el país?”

⁴ Latinobarometro 1998b “¿Y en los próximos doce meses cree Ud. que, en general, la situación económica del país será mejor, igual o peor que ahora?”

leader that looked to fill the void left by the failed party-state was *Comandante* Hugo Chávez.

The initial philosophizing and government expenditures that occurred under the direction of Hugo Chávez following his inauguration on February 2, 1999 were not collectively labeled as a socialist campaign. Rather, the current socialist project, affectionately known by *chavistas* as *Socialismo del Siglo XXI*, which has come to dominate the rhetoric of the President and has greatly influenced the development of social programs and social spending in Venezuela grew out of an affinity for a proposed ‘Third Way’ of development that was initially supported by the President following his release from prison in 1994 (Padgett 2006). The Third Way combined a mixed-capitalist system with a Rousseauian view of government as interlocutor between the state and sovereignty comprised of the entire people. Today, the Rousseauian view of government responsibility remains noticeable in the state’s role in the socialist project, however, the capitalism from the 20th century has been rhetorically discredited by the President, with projected growth now derived mainly from government spending, nationalized firms, and state-dominated cooperatives.

Understanding the philosophy: socialismo del Siglo XXI

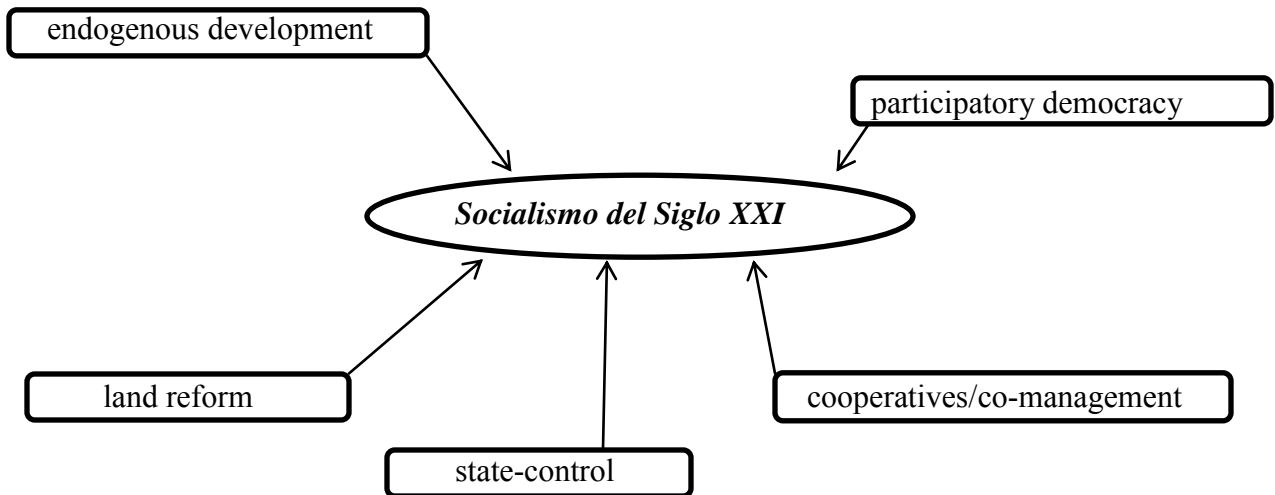
Before we can begin to understand the social and political transformations occurring in Venezuela today, we must have an understanding of the philosophy that has inspired Mr.

Chávez in undertaking this socialist project. Through a wealth of available interviews, presidential speeches, government propaganda, and hours of coded *Aló Presidente* transcripts, I will identify the overarching characteristics of the idealized version of *Socialismo del Siglo XXI* along with the philosophical beliefs of the Venezuelan president, Hugo Chávez Frías. Later, this will be compared with the actual implementation of 21st Century Socialism projects in order to analyze the extent to which Chavez's government has delivered tangible benefits to Venezuelans that they might expect based on the philosophy of 21st Century Socialism

On January 30, 2005 when President Chávez first announced his belief that “it is necessary to transcend capitalism...through socialism, true socialism, with equality and justice,” at the World Social Forum (Sojo 2005), the framework had been set for the Bolivarian Revolution to embark on a unique socialist project for the new millennium. The remainder of the speech gives insight into the Venezuelan social experiment Chávez imagined,

alluding to his distrust of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), perceived failures of the capitalist system, and his religious underpinnings in Christ as “one of the greatest anti-imperialist fighters, the redeemers of the poor, and one of the greatest revolutionaries in the history of the world” (Sojo 2005). This romanticized religious allusion highlights the grandiose thinking of Hugo Chávez and Chavez’s view of himself as a revolutionary in the context of a greater socialist transformation that has been passed down since the coming of Christ (Sojo 2005). Vitriolic castigation of western capitalist imperialism, praise for the Cuban administration, and reverence for the mythicized figure of Simón Bolívar throughout the speech all give clues to the ideology of *Socialismo del Siglo XXI* through the eyes of Hugo Chávez. Figure 1 provides an overview of the disparate parts that constitute 21st Century Socialism:

Figure 1: Overarching Ideas Constituting 21st Century Socialism



Characteristics of *Socialismo del Siglo XXI*:

- constant threat of western imperialism⁵
- distinctively Venezuelan in nature
- active democratic participation
 - social inclusion
- economic redistribution

⁵ This threat of western imperialism that Chávez is fond of speaking about is seen as much as an economic and socially globalizing threat of western society as western military intervention.

Independence from el diablo⁶ and the threat of western imperialism

The idea of western imperialism and capitalism as sources for the inequalities found within Venezuelan society today has been a main argument for the social activism of the Chávez administration. In fact, the nuanced attacks on western society have grown increasingly more vituperative over the years as the successes of the Bolivarian project have become increasingly tied with the success/failures of the Bolivarian President. Thus, over time, Chávez's need for a scapegoat has grown as the obstacles facing the Bolivarian Revolution have exposed its shortcomings (Manwaring 2006). Failures to quell violence, eradicate broad wealth disparity (Kozloff 2006), and rescue Venezuela from the entrenched "*corruptocracia*" (as Chávez is wont to call the failed bureaucratic state of the Punto Fijo regime) have left the government in need of an antagonist. In order to maintain the credibility of the Bolivarian project, the urgency with which social programs need to be enacted, and the need for Hugo Chávez to remain as president, the Bolivarian President often vilifies the latifundios and US capitalist system as an imminent threat to Venezuela's sovereign right to guaranteeing its citizens "a better life" (Rojas 2011).

Endogenous development and new international partners

In an attempt to extricate Venezuela from the globalized western capitalist system that has come to dominate the international economy, a main pillar of *Socialismo del Siglo XXI* is

⁶ Literally meaning "The Devil." Chávez frequently uses religious allusions in his speeches.

the promotion of endogenous development. Tying in to the tenant of independence from western influence, the idea of endogenous development is meant to shun reliance on competitively advanced western firms by allocating resources towards internally directed development, taking into consideration the human element of production. Adherence to this idea has led to state-directed cooperatives and the takeover of large *latifundios* throughout the country (Economist 2005b).

Equally important to promoting endogenous growth is the idea of creating international partnerships without reliance on western governments. Hugo Chávez has increasingly turned to unorthodox partnerships with countries like Iran, Russia, and China to fund and supply public works programs in Venezuela. Most importantly, *la Alternativa Bolivariana Para las Américas* (ALBA), the alternative international system to the US backed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), was created as a forum for “regional integration that transcends the prerogatives of the transnational corporations” (Arreaza 2004). In effect, ALBA is meant as an alternate free trade area that is focused on regional growth rather than Latin American partnership with U.S. firms (Harris and Azzi n.d).

Popular power of participatory democracy

“What is the core, what is the essence of the proposal that I am making to the Venezuelan people? – Popular Power.”⁷ *Hugo Chávez Frías August 26, 2007 (Aló Presidente 291)*

Arguably, the most important aspect of 21st Century Socialism is the idea of state legitimacy rising from the active, popular participation of the Venezuelan people. In an attempt to diminish the importance of local governance, which Chávez views as an extension of liberal democracy and incompatible with the populist nature of the Bolivarian project, semi-autonomous *consejos comunales*⁸ have been set-up throughout the country. These communal counsels have direct access to funding, can propose project spending, and can even implement projects locally without contracting out work.

In an attempt to create a truly bottom-up revolution, these councils allow for the direct involvement of the Venezuelan citizenry in community decision making, with the goal of fostering personal investment by the citizenry in their neighborhoods. These communal councils are distinct from local government, however, and act as a mechanism whereby community activists can surpass elected local officials by applying directly to the national government for project funding, which is why critics of these councils argue that communal council governance has allowed for Chávez to entrench his interests in local level politics by surpassing democratically elected members of government.

⁷ “¿Cuál es la medulla, cuál es la esencia de la propuesta que hago al pueblo venezolano? El Poder Popular.”

⁸ Literal meaning is “communal councils”.

Land reform

Land Reform has been crucial to the implementation of 21st Century Socialism. Specifically, the appropriation and allocation of *latifundios*⁹ to government-led cooperatives and locally run enterprises has complemented the idea that Venezuelan land belongs in the hands of Venezuelans (Wilpert 2006: 249). To justify the appropriation of *latifundio* lands, the Oligarchy is discredited as not being true Venezuelans but rather in a constant state of war with the will of the Venezuelan people. In the opening dialogue of episode 364 of *Aló Presidente* on October 3, 2010, Chávez makes clear that the fight to create a new economic model is the same fight to reincorporate *latifundio* lands back into the hands of Venezuelans. In citing the Federalist Venezuelan soldier Ezequiel Zamora¹⁰, Chávez notes in the same episode that only by “liberating the land from the hands of the *latifundios*, the bourgeoisie, and from the capitalists” can the Venezuelan people ever be free.

Cooperatives/co-management

The Chávez government has embarked upon massive cooperative and co-management implementation, with government sponsored cooperatives rising in Venezuela “from about 800 in 1998 to over 100,000 in 2005” (Wilpert 2006: 2). This spike in cooperatives

⁹ *Latifundios* meaning large tracts of land. Characteristically, these vast lands are owned by one or a small group of person(s), often considered to be elitists by *chavistas*.

¹⁰ Ezequiel Zamora was a Venezuelan soldier and leader of the Federalists in the Federal War (*Guerra Federal*) of 1859-1863.

employed nearly 1.5 million Venezuelans in 2005, nearly 10% of Venezuela's adult population (National Superintendency of Cooperatives 2005). However, with most business orders and funding coming directly from the coffers of the national government, and most government revenues in the form of petrodollars¹¹, the sustainability of these programs has been questioned; especially, following the global recession and subsequent dramatic drops in oil prices in 2008 (Pinheiro 2009: 841).

State control

The idea of a strong centralized government with expansive powers consolidated in the hands of the Executive branch is considered imperative to the success of the Bolivarian project. The bottom-up socialist revolution that Chávez's *Socialismo del Siglo XXI* is meant to inspire is only possible with an effective leader with unchecked powers to introduce and implement legislation. Legislative checks and balances are viewed as a hindrance to the effective implementation of government-led initiatives. *Chavistas* regard the *Asamblea Nacional* as only a legitimizing mechanism for Government policy and as such, a forum of incorporation for Opposition critique. Indeed, the PSUV¹² majority in the legislature throughout Chávez's tenure has acted as little more than a rubber stamp in the passing of the Government's major policy initiatives (Halling 2008: 2); even extending executive emergency powers to the office of the President upon request from the Executive.

¹¹ Petrodollars referring to revenues earned through the sale of petroleum.

¹² Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela

The idea of consolidated central power and the Legislature as a legitimizing mechanism for Government policy is not unique to the Chávez regime or the Bolivarian project, however. Indeed, historically weak legislatures have been characteristic of many countries throughout Latin America. Under the AD and COPEI administrations of the latter half of the twentieth century, the legislature acted as a forum for oppositional discontent and majority approval (Monaldi 2006).

CHAPTER II

ALÓ PRESIDENTE DATA AND ANALYSIS

To assess how President Chávez attempts to convey his philosophy to the people of Venezuela, I coded the introductory portion of *Aló Presidente* shows from September 10, 2006 until November 14, 2010. This period begins prior to the 2006 election for the National Assembly and continues through ~80 episodes until the 2010 legislative elections. Coding was carried out by using transcripts of the program available at <http://www.alopresidente.gob.ve>. By covering this broad time period, we are better able to assess the policy areas that Chávez has conscientiously decided to discuss and educate the Venezuelan people about through his public exposure in the media. Television media remains an important line of communication for Venezuelans, with nearly 66% of Venezuelans watching news programming every day and a cumulative 81% of Venezuelans receiving their news from television programming at least once a week in 2007.¹³ These percentages slightly increase to 67% and 83%, respectively, of Venezuelans self-reporting watching the news at least one or more times per week in 2008.¹⁴ *Aló Presidente* remains one of the oldest direct lines of communication between *el Palacio de Miraflores*¹⁵ and the Venezuelan citizenry.

¹³ LAPOP Venezuela 2007: 18. Special Topics. (a2) Con qué frecuencia mira noticias en la TV...

¹⁴ LAPOP Venezuela 2008: 18. Special Topics (a2) Mira noticias en la TV

¹⁵ The official workplace of the President of Venezuela

The show began as a weekly, interactive radio forum to promote dialogue between the President and the people on May 23, 1999 and has evolved over time into the current quasi-structured television program that remains on air today. Average air time for *Aló Presidente* is ~6.22 hours, which diminishes the feasibility of coding each episode in its entirety. Thus, to make it possible to analyze shows covering several years, I coded the beginning ~15 minutes of each transcript.¹⁶ By coding the first fifteen minutes, ample time was afforded Mr. Chávez to ‘set the stage’ of the day’s program, and open the discussion about the major policy areas that he meant to discuss that day.

Policy areas covered as major show themes in Aló

Table 1 summarizes the major public policy areas most often addressed by President Chávez when communicating through his weekly television show, *Aló Presidente*, to the Venezuelan citizenry. These public policy areas are paramount to our analysis of the effectiveness of social spending programs presented later in Section G. Comparative Analysis: *Aló Presidente y Los Misiones*. Due to the unpredictability and often unscripted nature of the show, Chávez often freely discusses his current thoughts and feelings. It is common for fleeting thoughts of the president to be openly expressed, but such offhanded comments are not counted in this table alongside the major themes of each show which dominate that day’s program discussion.

¹⁶ In order to ascertain how many pages equated to fifteen minutes, the first five show transcripts were read and compared with the available video editions of *Aló Presidente* located at <http://www.alopresidente.gob.ve/Multimedia/20>.

The *Aló Presidente* transcripts that I utilize are drawn from <http://www.alopresidente.gob.ve>. The data consist of available transcripts beginning with the final show three months prior to the 2006 Presidential elections until one month following the 2010 National Assembly elections. I expect, Chávez will want to grab the attention of the audience within the opening of every episode of *Aló Presidente*, therefore I read and coded each transcript until the approximately fifteenth minute of the program.

I also collected data about statements that fit in a “philosophy education” category. Those data are examined in greater detail in Section H but for now it is important to note that President Chávez attempts to reeducate the populace in personal Bolivarian ideology in nearly every episode. This socialization of the Venezuelan populace into Chávez social spending programs is explored in greater depth in Section J.

Table 1: Major themes discussed in the opening segment of *Aló Presidente*

Policy Areas	2006*	2007	2008**	2009	2010
Education	1/1 100%	5/25 20.0%	4/14 28.6%	2/13 15.4%	2/21 9.5%
Public Health		3/25 12.0%	2/14 14.3%	2/13 15.4%	2/21 9.5%
Water/Agri	1/1 100%	7/25 28.0%	4/14 28.6%	5/13 38.5%	5/21 23.8%
Foreign Affairs		9/25 36.0%	1/14 7.1%	2/13 15.4%	6/21 28.6%
Infrastructure		3/25 12.0%	2/14 14.3%	4/13 30.8%	5/21 23.8%
Oil/Energy		2/25 8.0%	4/14 28.6%	2/13 15.4%	4/21 19.0%

NOTES:

i. Available *Aló Presidente* television program transcripts: Episode 367, Episode 366, Episode 365, Episode 364, Episode 363, Episode 362, Episode 361, Episode 360, Episode 359, Episode 358, Episode 357, Episode 356, Episode 355, Episode 353, Episode 352, Episode 351, Episode 350, Episode 349, Episode 348, Episode 347, Episode 346, Episode 345, Episode 344, Episode 343, Episode 342, Episode 341, Episode 339, Episode 338, Episode 334, Episode 331, Episode 330, Episode 328, Episode 325, Episode 320, Episode 318, Episode 314, Episode 312, Episode 311, Episode 309, Episode 308, Episode 307, Episode 306, Episode 304, Episode 302, Episode 301, Episode 300, Episode 299, Episode 298, Episode 297, Episode 296, Episode 295, Episode 291, Episode 290, Episode 289, Episode 288, Episode 286, Episode 285, Episode 284, Episode 283, Episode 282, Episode 281, Episode 280, Episode 279, Episode 278, Episode 277, Episode 276, Episode 274, Episode 266, Episode 265, Episode 264, Episode 263, Episode 262 Maybe add years or something that will allow the reader to know how many episodes go into the analysis for each year column in Table 1

ii. Several shows began with little evidence as to the overarching issues set to be discussed later in the program. These episodes have not been tabulated in any policy category but have been included in the total shows per year calculation to the right of the forward slash in the above chart. If the opening commentary and dialogue pertained to two or more issues, multiple issues are included in the above count.

iii. Some posted transcripts were unreadable in their downloaded format, as such, they were not included in the above tabulation.

iv. Chávez cannot be sure when his audience will be tuning in throughout his day-long programs. Shows were coded to the ~15th minute with the expectation that within the opening of the show is when Chávez is most likely to announce his major policy initiatives

* 2006: Due to the suspension of the program for ~2 months prior to the legislative elections of 2006, only the preceding television program is coded for this year.

** Episode 306 (March 2, 2008) – Show devoted mainly to public safety

Breaking down the data

From Table 1, it is apparent that discussion of issues related to adequate water and to agriculture tend to dominate the major topic areas of opening dialogue in *Aló Presidente*, and that it does so for several years. This is an important signaling mechanism from Mr. Chávez to the Venezuelan people about where the interests of his government lie. Given the high rate of poverty prevalent in Venezuela, it is unsurprising that these staple issues would garner the most attention from the President in his outreach to his citizenry.

The topic of *Education*¹⁷ has been relegated from 2008 to 2010 to single digit percentages. Garnering attention in 1/5 of the total episodes of the president's coded opening dialogue following the legislative elections in 2006, in later years the topic of Education receives less than 10% of the total coded episodes. It has been usurped as a major topic of discussion on *Aló Presidente* by the policy area of *Foreign Affairs* in 2010, which has seen a large resurgence from a lull of attention in 2008 and 2009 when the global recession hit. Curiously, the resurgence of the topic of *Foreign Affairs* in Mr. Chávez's dialogue to the Venezuelan people surrounding the 2010 legislative elections also correlates to the large amount of air time dedicated to *Foreign Affairs* immediately leading up to and following the 2006 legislative elections (represented by the 2007 data). This is not a coincidence and Mr. Chávez's attention to the subject surrounding both legislative elections signals his willingness to play on anti-western sentiments that linger from the harsh, broadly

¹⁷ Throughout my analyses of *Aló Presidente*, italics signify a specific policy area that was categorized in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

unpopular neoliberal policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the early nineties to maintain support for his government. Furthermore, his discussions of international partnerships with countries such as Russia, China, Iran, and Libya¹⁸ and dedication of show time to *La Alternativa Bolivariana para los pueblos de América* (ALBA)¹⁹ as an alternative to the western backed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) supports the notion that the Bolivarian Revolution is idealized to offer a divergent regional and world order from the western-backed, neoliberal market structure that dominates the world economy and geopolitics today.

The topic of infrastructure has gained attention over the past three years. Rising from only 12% of the coded episodes' opening dialogue dedicated to the television program in 2007 to nearly one quarter of episodes dedicated to the discussion of infrastructure development in Venezuela in 2010. Infrastructure programs discussed tended to focus on low-cost housing, passenger rail tracks linking populous cities, and the importance of the national oil company, PDVSA, in reinvesting oil profits into state-led public infrastructure spending.²⁰

¹⁸ Episodes 285, 283, 282, 343 discuss Iranian inputs of production and technology that are in use in Venezuelan socialist factories and cooperatives. Episode 365 contains focused discussion on Chinese company cooperation in developing passenger rail (as part of larger *Plan Ferroviario Nacional*).

¹⁹ Episodes 355, 353, 352, 349, 302, 266 all contain segmented discussions on the benefits of non-western partnership through the empowerment of Caribbean countries in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA).

²⁰ Episodes 365, 358, 328 discuss details and international partnerships involved in successfully implementing *El Plan Ferroviario Nacional* in laying national rail. Episode 343 and 276 discuss housing development for the impoverished, specifically *Ciudad Camino de los Indios*, socialist housing complex project for indigenous population. Episode 288 provides detailed discussion about the importance of reinvested oil revenues from PDVSA in infrastructure development.

Amongst major policy categories discussed on *Aló Presidente*, *Public Health* remains the most static category of discussion over time, with Health receiving discussion in, on average 12.8% of the coded opening show segments. This category is not as volatile as several other categories over time, only fluctuating to a low of 9.5% and high of 15.4% of episodes. *Public Health* is also unique as a major policy category in its likelihood with which the Missions programs are specifically mentioned and discussed at length by Mr. Chávez.²¹ By signaling out the Missions programs in his discussion of *Public Health*, Chávez is promoting government initiatives while attempting to reeducate the Venezuelan populace in the benefit of government sponsored socialist programs.

²¹ Episodes 357, 341, 311, 296, 291, 277 all delve into the specifics and public benefits of *Barrio Adentro* and *Misión Niño Jesús*. Two public health facilities, *el Centro Diagnóstico Integral* and *el Cardiológico Infantil*, are also inaugurated on the show in a display on government action in combating public health issues. Episode 334 is unique in its discussion of public health focusing predominantly on national production of diapers compared with privatized diaper production in the United States. Specific attention is given to the disparity in diaper quality available to the children of the poor in the US diaper market as an example of segregated class structure in a capitalist society.

Marketing government initiatives: tabulating guest appearances on *Aló*

Presidente

To better our understanding of how President Chávez presents his social programs to the Venezuelan citizenry, I extracted tabulations of guest appearances over the past four years from the coded *Aló Presidente* transcripts. By examining the frequency and types of guests that Chávez is placing on his television program we can further our information about the policy initiatives that Chávez is emphasizing most in the marketing of himself to his citizenry.

Table 2: *Aló Presidente* Transcript Data – Brief discussion of President Chavez’s Philosophy

Policy Area	2006*	2007	2008	2009	2010
Education**		5/25	1/14	1/13	2/21
Public Health		6/25	4/14	4/13	2/21
Water/Agri		3/25	5/14	6/13	4/21
Foreign Affairs		3/25	1/14	2/13	1/21
Infrastructure		2/25	0/14	0/13	0/21
Oil/Energy		1/25	2/14	2/13	1/21
Religion	1/1	1/25	1/14	2/13	4/21

NOTES:

i. Sampling pool of available *Aló Presidente* television program transcripts: Episode 367, Episode 366, Episode 365, Episode 364, Episode 363, Episode 362, Episode 361, Episode 360, Episode 359, Episode 358, Episode 357, Episode 356, Episode 355, Episode 353, Episode 352, Episode 351, Episode 350, Episode 349, Episode 348, Episode 347, Episode 346, Episode 345, Episode 344, Episode 343, Episode 342, Episode 341, Episode 339, Episode 338, Episode 334, Episode 331, Episode 330, Episode 328, Episode 325, Episode 320, Episode 318, Episode 314, Episode 312, Episode 311, Episode 309, Episode 308, Episode 307, Episode 306, Episode 304, Episode 302, Episode 301, Episode 300, Episode 299, Episode 298, Episode 297, Episode 296, Episode 295, Episode 291, Episode 290, Episode 289, Episode 288, Episode 286, Episode 285, Episode 284, Episode 283, Episode 282, Episode 281, Episode 280, Episode 279, Episode 278, Episode 277, Episode 276, Episode 274, Episode 266, Episode 265, Episode 264, Episode 263, Episode 262

ii. Due to the unpredictability and often unscripted nature of the show, Chávez often freely discusses his current thoughts and feelings. It is common for fleeting thoughts of the president to be openly expressed. These comments were counted and categorized in the above table. Comments spanning the childhood of the president, the beguiling nature of capitalism, and religious allusions are all frequently made by the president. These comments will be explored below in the analysis of the side notes frequented by the president during *Aló Presidente* to provide a backdrop to the reader about the tone of the show. However, in categorizing the commentary, these comments are viewed as distinct from the brief commentary on major policy initiatives that the government is currently seeking to educate the people about.

iii. If comments in the opening commentary and dialogue pertained to two or more issues, multiple issues are included in the above count. Thus, it is possible for a year’s total count of commentary to surpass the total number of shows.

v. Some posted transcripts were unreadable in their downloaded format, as such, they were not included in the above tabulation.

vi. Chávez cannot be sure when his audience will be tuning in throughout his day-long programs. Shows were coded to the ~15th minute with the expectation that within the opening of the show is when Chávez is most likely to announce his major policy initiatives

* 2006: Due to the suspension of the program for ~2 months prior to the legislative elections of 2006, only the preceding television program is coded for this year.

** Since we read *Aló Presidente* as a tool whereby Chavez expects to educate the populace on socialist philosophy and government initiatives, we must explicitly state what comments do and do not qualify under the Policy Area of Education when coding for minor discussions. In this table, only comments pertaining to the Educational system of Venezuela were counted and categorized under *Education*. Comments pertaining to the socialization of the Venezuelan citizenry into the Socialist project do not fall under this category and will be discussed in the analysis of the show.

Across the top of Table 2 guests are categorized according to the titles given to them in the show transcripts. Rows indicate the major policy areas tabulated in Table 1 and indicate the policy areas with which the guests were associated.

Government officials are broken down into six categories: *Military*, *Ministers*, *Governors*, *Mayors*, *Police*, and *Others*. Mayors tend to be introduced briefly in passing, however, at times mayors discuss local matters with the president. Governors too tend to be relegated minimal time on the show because the show is mainly devoted to personal and regional conversation. Thus, these officials as a whole add relatively little to the discussion of advancing Chavez's policy initiatives. However, the frequency with which these local officials appear on the program, supports the idea that Chavez is attempting to appear receptive and in touch with the local issues concerning the common people. The *Other* subcategory of Government officials furthers this idea due to the relatively frequent occurrence of these individuals and the large number of communal council members who make-up this subsection.

Perhaps, most important to our analysis of Table 2 is the subcolumn, *Ministers*. Ministers are appointed by the President to serve a specified purpose as the Government's manager in a specific policy area. From the data, it is apparent that ministers from ministries, whose policy purview includes water and agricultural production, tend to receive the most acknowledgements from President Chavez in the opening of *Aló Presidente*. Frequently, many ministers are present at the taping of *Aló Presidente* and act as a live audience for the

President. By Chavez hand-picking these individuals out of his government to talk about in front of the camera, he is sending a clear message about which ministries his government gives priority.

The large number of show guests who are manual worker in agricultural employment also reaffirms this stance that agriculture remains Chavez's main selling point for government initiatives. We expect too that men manual laborers would outnumber women workers. However, the large inequitable distribution of men in relation to women agricultural workers is surprising, given the representativeness that the Bolivarian Constitution guarantees, suggesting that the idea of gender equality at this time remains largely rhetorical. Male guests not only dominate the representation of agricultural fields of employment on the program but also the *Oil/Energy* sector, as well, leading us to suspect that Chávez is consciously marketing himself in this manner. It is notable, however, that gender parity is present in Education and Public Health. These are policy areas where

women have long been more acceptable, as those are issues that have a stereotypically ‘feminine’ policy domain, and are often where women are best represented in government.

Quantifying philosophizing during Aló Presidente

Table 3 focuses on comments made by the President in regards to the Major Policy areas that were categorized in Table 1. Unlike the show themes explored in Table 1, however, this commentary did not develop into a full discussion in the opening ~15 minutes of the show, was and instead appears to be brief signals about the President’s philosophy.

Government propaganda not related to the major six policy areas was not categorized in the table (with the exception of *Religion*) due to the frequent commentary by the President that does not directly relate to the television show’s main policy theme. By examining this data, we are able to better establish our understanding of which policy areas Chavez has been concerned with discussing in the media.

Table 3: *Aló Presidente* Transcript Data – Types of Guests on the Show

Policy Area	Government Officials						Foreigners	Workers M / F	Children M / F	Management	Other	Candidate
	Military	Ministers	Governors	Mayors	Police	Others						
Education		2					1	3 / 3	6 / 5	2		7
Public Health		6						3 / 3	1 / 1	5		1
Water/Agri		12					2	21 / 5		2		1
Foreign Affairs		1					8	1 / 0				1
Infrastructure		4						0 / 1		1		2
Oil/Energy		4						5 / 0		7		
Other	9	13	20	9	4	10	1	4 / 3	4 / 5	2	23	3
TOTAL	9	42	20	9	4	10	1	37/15	11/11	19	35	3

NOTES:

i. This table reflects a total from the available sampling pool of *Aló Presidente* program transcripts: Episode 367, Episode 366, Episode 365, Episode 364, Episode 363, Episode 362, Episode 361, Episode 360, Episode 359, Episode 358, Episode 357, Episode 356, Episode 355, Episode 353, Episode 352, Episode 351, Episode 350, Episode 349, Episode 348, Episode 347, Episode 346, Episode 345, Episode 344, Episode 343, Episode 342, Episode 341, Episode 339, Episode 338, Episode 334, Episode 331, Episode 330, Episode 328, Episode 325, Episode 320, Episode 318, Episode 314, Episode 312, Episode 311, Episode 309, Episode 308, Episode 307, Episode 306, Episode 304, Episode 302, Episode 301, Episode 300, Episode 299, Episode 298, Episode 297, Episode 296, Episode 295, Episode 291, Episode 290, Episode 289, Episode 288, Episode 286, Episode 285, Episode 284, Episode 283, Episode 282, Episode 281, Episode 280, Episode 279, Episode 278, Episode 277, Episode 276, Episode 274, Episode 266, Episode 265, Episode 264, Episode 263, Episode 262

ii. Some posted transcripts were unreadable in their downloaded format, as such, they were not included in the above tabulation.

iii. Chávez cannot be sure when his audience will be tuning in throughout his day-long programs. Shows were coded to the ~15th minute with the expectation that within the opening of the show is when Chávez is most likely to announce his major policy initiatives.

iv. In some cases, the titles given to guests of the show fell into overlapping categories. In these cases, the participant/mentioned audience member was appropriated a place based on the significance of his/her appearance (ie. In Episode 283, Cuban Agricultural Advisors are recognized by President Chávez. These audience members are classified above as *Foreigners* and not as *Workers* or *Managerial* since their primary significance on the show rests upon their symbolizing the deep ties between Cuba and Venezuela vis-à-vis the exchange of subsidized Venezuelan oil with these knowledgeable Cuban workers).

v. The *Guests* column titled *Others* includes all guests from the show whose titles either do not fall into any of the other Guest categories or whose titles do not convey a clear line of work. These individuals are frequently listed by name only (ie. Episode 300 Freddy Santaella, Episode 285 Señor Carlos Carvajal, etc)

vi. The *Other* Section of the *Children* column consists of all children, whose titles from the *Aló Presidente* transcripts do not relay any information about which specific Policy Area they are meant to contribute to in the program dialogue (ie. Episode 314. Niño asistente). It is still useful in counting these children in order to better our understanding of the representativeness between girls and boys that President Chávez projects to the Venezuelan citizenry on his show.

vii. The *Guests* sub sectioned as *Military*, *Governors*, *Mayors*, and *Police* under the category of *Government* are tallies only and do not reflect any possible discussion that may have taken place during the entirety of the show. Because our coding allows for only the beginning ~15 minutes to be examined, it is imperative not to assume what function these guests will serve throughout the program. By tallying the frequency with which these guests appear on the show in relation to other guests, however, we are able to account for the importance that Chávez places on the individuals that hold these posts.

viii. *Candidate* refers specifically to PSUV candidates for office.

From examination of Table 3 we see that brief philosophy statements related to the topic of *Water/Agriculture* tend to dominate discussion over time. Similar to our analysis of Table 1, we find that the President's attention to *Education* has diminished over time, while brief philosophy statements related to *Public Health* too have decreased. It is important to note that philosophizing in general decreased in 2010. Perhaps, *Aló* has become more structured in nature. The increase in brief philosophy statements about religion by the president over the past four years is also interesting to note. The greater use of religious speech present in *Aló* during the national legislative election year of 2010, suggests that Chávez may be more inclined to pander to the religious sentiments of his Venezuelan constituency.

Evaluating public support for majority policy areas discussed in *Aló Presidente*

In this section, we cross-analyze the coded *Aló Presidente* policy areas' discussion data with popular support data from *Latinobarómetro*, the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), and *Datanalisis*. In utilizing this data and understanding the perceived successes and shortcomings of the Mission Programs over time by the Venezuelan people, we are able to understand the impact of Chávez's attempted socialization of the Venezuelan populace through the exposure of public policy discussion in the media, specifically the attempted reeducation of the Venezuelan populace through Mr. Chávez's socialist message conveyed in our coded *Aló Presidente* transcript data found in Table 1. Mainly, we can begin to answer the question: *How well has Chávez succeeded in selling his socialist project to the Venezuelan people?*

Based on the findings of the analysis of discussion of Major Policy areas covered on *Aló Presidente*, which is our proxy for the topics Mr. Chávez has chosen to expend his time promoting, I expect that data from *Latinobarómetro* and *Datanalisis* will reflect positive changes over time in categories concerning major policy areas of *Infrastructure, Oil and Energy*, and *Foreign Affairs* partnerships. Given the large percentage of show time across our *Aló Presidente* sampling allocated to selling government initiatives on divisive *Water/Agriculture* issues, I expect that polling concerning agriculture production will have very favorably increased over the past half decade.

I use public opinion survey data to measure Venezuelan's attitudes toward specific Misiones and policy areas. To minimize the impact of skewed data (whether due to political reasons or poor sampling practice), I use survey data from several sources. Due to the resource limitations and potential for politicization of local firms, it becomes imperative that objective regional and internationally collected data also be utilized. This is especially the case in Venezuela, where (over the past ten years) Venezuelan society has become as polarized as its politics. Comparing public opinion data gathered by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), with data from *Latinobarómetro* both of which are scholarly, international public opinion data gathering projects, and *Datanalisis* that is widely regarded as the most reputable local polling firm within Venezuela²², allows

²² Datanálisis has been referenced in the weekly periodical, *The Economist*: 2009. "Chavez for ever?", as well as, the independent website, *venezuelanalysis.com*. 2009. in "Polls Show Economic Optimism and Strong Support for Venezuelan President"

for the most careful representation of public opinion available. By incorporating these three, generally well-regarded data sources, I ensure that criticism of the objectivity of one firm does not take away from the credibility of the analysis.

Years covered by the surveys vary across each source, but each source offers relevant data overlapping with the *Aló Presidente* transcript years coded. LAPOP data coming from the Venezuela country surveys of 2007, 2008, and 2010 aid in our discussion of the availability, acceptance, and quality of the Mission Programs that Chávez has espoused on his television program. Relevant data from regional *Latinobarómetro* surveys covering 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 further contextualize the success by which Mr. Chávez has been able to socialize Venezuelans into accepting the Mission Programs, which act as the foundational socialist pillars of *Socialismo del Siglo XXI*. Finally, local survey data from *Datanalisis* covering the tenure of Chávez's presidency provides local polling firm findings about Venezuelan preferences for the Mission Programs.

Chávez appears to have had success selling his *Foreign Affairs* initiatives to the Venezuelan people. Given the large amount of time in the introductory segment of *Aló Presidente* dedicated to promoting international partnerships and undercutting western liberal democracy and capitalism this is unsurprising. A poll by *Latinobarómetro* in 2009 shows over 60% of Venezuelans responding favorably to questioning about their stance on

ALBA.²³ Indeed, data taken from the 2007 *Latinobarómetro* survey also hint at a favorable foreign affairs approval from the Venezuelan people with 62.5% of all Venezuelans approving of the job of the government in handling foreign relations (LAPOP 2007).²⁴

The popularity of government funded *Education* initiatives holds up slightly less well. In 2009, 58.9% of Venezuelans approved of government funded education with 16.2% of Venezuelans responding “Not satisfied at all” about the functioning of government sponsored education initiatives (LAPOP 2009). From 2007 to 2010, we see less than a 2% rise in participation at *Mision Ribas*, an education Mission geared towards educating Venezuela’s more than five million high school dropouts, from 9.29% to 10.93% of Venezuelans saying they have made use of the free Mission services. This relative lack of positive response by the Venezuelan people to government sponsored education reforms versus foreign affairs initiatives by the government correlates with the marginal discussion of *Education* reforms on *Aló* vs. the great amount of show time devoted to foreign affairs. It is also possible that foreign affairs are largely abstract for citizens. Thus, merely bashing the US may be favorably received by the Venezuelan people, while education is a concrete policy area that people actually use, and thus they have a more concrete basis for evaluating it.

In *Public Health* too Chávez appears to be getting his message across to the Venezuelan citizenry with nearly 90% of respondents to *Latinobarómetro*’s annual 2008 survey self-

²³ A favorable rating being 6 or higher on *Latinobarómetro* 2009 : Please rate the institutions below from 1 to 10, with one being very bad and 10 being very good.

²⁴ *Latinobarómetro* <http://www.latinobarometro.org.lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/latino/LATAnalyzeQuestion.jsp> 2007

reporting that “Healthcare” should be mainly in the hands of the Government.²⁵ In 2010, *Mission Barrio Adentro*, a Bolivarian social mission devoted to promoting publicly funded health and dental care to Venezuelans, was frequented by nearly half of the population according to the Latin American Public Opinion Project.²⁶

Water/Agriculture discussion tended to dominate the major show themes and philosophizing of the President during the past four years of coded *Aló Presidente* transcripts. How well has Chávez succeeded in selling these programs? In 2010, MERCAL, the government sponsored chain that supplies subsidized food and other goods at affordable prices, was used by 63.17% of Venezuelans (LAPOP 2010). Reports from *Datanalisis* and covered in the periodical, *El Universal*, confirm the positive spike in usage of Mission MERCAL reflected in the LAPOP data, with a recorded 13% spike in usage from 2005 to 2006 alone (EL Universal 2006).²⁷

The concern expressed by Chavez for *Infrastructure* development has rapidly grown to consume more show time during 2009 and 2010 than the prior years of our coded *Aló* transcripts. This could be in part due to what the Economist Intelligence Unit noted in its 2008 study, rating Venezuela infrastructure a C due to concerns that infrastructure has “deteriorated in recent decades because of underinvestment, stemming from a lack of effective administrative capacity and a decline in fiscal revenue. In an attempt to reverse

²⁵ “De la lista de actividades le voy a leer Cuáles cree Ud. Que deben estar mayoritariamente en manos del estado y cuales deben estar mayoritariamente en manos privadas? La Salud.

²⁶ 46.72% of respondents self-reporting to have utilized the Mission in the past twelve months. LAPOP 2010

²⁷ http://www.eluniversal.com/2006/05/04/eco_ava_04A703401.shtml May 4, 2006

the decline, the government has decided to dedicate a portion of windfall oil revenue to infrastructure” (Economist Intelligence Unit 2008).²⁸

The spike in 2010 in discussion concerning *Oil/Energy* on *Aló* is understandable given the findings of a 2010 study by *Datanalisis*, whereby nearly 80% of the population say they are affected by the problem of electricity shortages.²⁹ Ironically, during Episode 341 of *Aló Presidente* (October 4, 2009), the President was embarrassed by an electricity gaffe in the program opening, which may have led to greater awareness on the part of the President about the need to speak out about government initiatives to combat electricity shortages. The government’s handling of Venezuela’s vast petroleum reserves and the volatility of oil prices over the past decade has also not sat well with Venezuelans, with 50.8% of *Latinobarómetro* respondents in 2008 reporting to be dissatisfied with the manner in which the Government is facing rising oil prices. Given the instability of world markets during the end of 2008 and the dissatisfaction on the part of Venezuelans with the handling of the situation by the government, it follows that we would expect the jump in program discussion allotted to *Oil/Energy* from 2007 to 2008.

Sometimes the arrow seems to go from discussion by Chávez on *Aló Presidente* to public approval, and sometimes the arrow seems to go the other way, with public (dis)approval possibly being a prompt for Pres. Chavez to pay more attention to an issue.

²⁸ Latinobarometer does not directly ask respondents from Venezuela their opinion of state infrastructure.

²⁹ <http://informe21.com/~mgessen/datanalisis/datanalisis-80-ciento-poblacion-se-siente-afectada-problema-electrico>

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The expansive political, social, and economic change over the past decade in Venezuela makes it important for political scientists and policymakers to understand how Chávez has sold his ‘revolution’ to the Venezuelan citizenry. President Hugo Chávez, having embraced visual and social media outlets (television, radio, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) as a way of conveying his message to the masses has become arguably one of the most publically exposed *jefes del estado* in the world. By understanding the context of Chávez’s exposure in the media, specifically, by evaluating his weekly show, *Aló Presidente*, we gain insight into the ways that Chávez has managed to maintain power through democratically legitimate means. Furthermore, by exploring the different policy areas that Chávez is most likely to discuss on his show, we gain a better understanding about how President Chávez is trying to socialize the Venezuelan populace in his Bolivarian ideology. The findings of this research suggest that Hugo Chávez appears to be well attuned to the complaints of the Venezuelan citizenry. His responsiveness in *Aló Presidente* -- answering questions and explaining government programs aimed at the perceived shortcomings of his government -- may have helped enable Chávez to maintain broad support for himself and his PSUV over the past decade. The ability of the government to market social causes and programs that it supports is a possibly important explanatory factor in understanding how Chávez has managed to stay in power through democratic means for over a decade, even while drawing severe criticism, both internally and externally. The data highlight the

importance of the topics of Foreign Affairs, Water/Agriculture, and Infrastructure in how Hugo Chávez is marketing himself to his constituents. Data concerning the presentation of guests on the show also alludes to the important roles that Ministers play in marketing Chávez's policy initiatives, with airtime frequently allocated to Ministers related to Water/Agriculture issues. Data about how the President uses his television show to express his philosophy to Venezuelans suggest that religiosity has become a greater selling point in more recent years. This could possibly be attributed to the perceived shortcomings within the administration's implementation of its policy agenda, or the socialist agenda, itself. The data presented here also further our understanding of the importance placed on Water/Agriculture issues by Mr. Hugo Chávez when trying to relate government initiatives directly to the Venezuelan people. The fact that Chávez has relied on these staple issues as a fallback for garnering support from the Venezuelan citizenry should not altogether surprise us, especially, when viewed in light of the guests that have appeared on the show.

This paper studied the marketing of government programs and presentation of philosophy about major policy areas in accordance with Bolivarian ideology on *Aló Presidente*. This analysis of one of the ways President Chavez uses the media indicates that it would also be interesting to study the other types of social media utilized by President Chavez, especially, given the recent wave of democratic uprisings across the Middle East associated with the use of social media. Could Mr. Chávez's usage and wide following (~1.4 million on Twitter alone) also contribute to his popularity, even amongst poor Venezuelan youths?

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